



Vol. 13, No. 1

# The Iguana



Jan. 12, 2001

## Year in Review 2000

# Joint Task Force meets challenges of new millennium

**Compiled and edited by  
Master Sgt. Pat McKenna  
Public Affairs**

The men and women of Joint Task Force-Bravo accomplished much in 2000, the first year of the new millennium. Soldiers, airmen and Marines, along with civil servants, foreign service nationals and contractors met the challenges that faced the command with enthusiasm, professionalism and pride.

Here's a roundup of some of the events that took place over the past year in chronological order.

### JANUARY

The Soto Cano community escaped the chaos anticipated as a result of the Y2K computer glitch; however, the Love Bug and the Funny Joke virus would later bite the base. (Computer Tip: If you receive 50 e-mails in one morning that contain the subject line "I Love You," assume you either have a computer virus or that you're "the man." Some here suspect that Y2K was the culprit responsible for the painfully slow Internet connection on Soto Cano; however, sources reveal that, in fact, the base's narrow bandwidth is by design so that the masses forget they have no running water in their hooches.

•In other news, the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment deployed to Venezuela after deadly floods and mudslides contributed to that nation's worst natural disaster in a century. With an estimated death toll of 30,000 and 400,000 homeless, the 1-228th had their hands full flying relief missions in their UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters. Crews evacuated the sick, injured and stranded, and transported medical and relief supplies as well as food and water throughout this South American country.

•Also in January, Command Sgt. Major Herman Fisher accepted responsibility as the top enlisted member on the installation, replacing Command Sgt. Maj. Humberto Rivera-Nadal. During the change of responsibility ceremony, Fisher said, "I consider this a unique opportunity to work with one of the most diversified groups of people in the military today."

•Later, it would be revealed that the new command sergeant major fancied butterflies and Beanie Babies. No joke.

•The Air Force Forces received its 60K "Tunner" at the beginning of the new year. The vehicle allows the loading and unloading of cargo on and off a variety of aircraft from a C-130 to a 747. The loader is capable of transporting and transferring up to 60,000 pounds of palletized cargo, shipping containers, airdrop platforms and rolling stock. It also pulls double duty as a stage for change of command ceremonies.

### FEBRUARY

In February, the Soto Cano community enjoyed more than 60 satellite channels of state-side television programming. Unfortunately, only six of them actually worked. That's because the satellite provider's signal was too weak to reach Honduras. I might be exaggerating a bit here, since only 33 of the channels went out. Said former J-6 Director Maj. Milton Mariani, "We'll find a fix. We know how important satellite television is for the morale of the task force." By the end of the year, J-6 had the base's cable TV system back on track. Some viewers, however, have noticed a notable void since the very popular Comedy Channel and Cartoon Network are missing from the cable lineup.

•Soto Cano members attended a variety of Black History Month events on base, including a cultural event held at the dining facility, a fashion show at the former Beach Club (now The Oasis Club) and video presentations shown at the base library.

•New Horizons 2000 kicked off this month with Task Force Santa Fe beginning in El Salvador and Task Force Pelican starting in Belize. The task forces built schools, clinics and wells in these countries over a six-month period. "This humanitarian assistance exercise strengthens an unwaiverable relationship between our two governments that promotes peace, prosperity, security and democracy. New Horizons 2000 improves quality of life for students, teachers, soldiers and every Belizean citizen," said Hon Said Musa, Belize's prime minister.

•During the first week of February,



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Charles Ramey

**Staff Sgt. Mark Howland, former Soto Cano Fire Department station captain, extinguishes flames during a fire south of the base Jan. 20, 2000.**

medical teams from Kirtland AFB, N.M., and several other bases participated in a medical readiness training exercise or MEDRETE in the town of Santa Barbara. Almost 4,000 Honduran patients, who might not normally have had the opportunity to see a doctor or dentist, received medical or dental treatment during the exercise.

•The Fire Dawgs saw plenty of action in February, the height of dry season, battling brush fires and blazes off base. Although their primary duties are to protect base facilities and respond to aircraft emergencies, the department's 31 airmen and six civilians routinely respond to requests for assistance outside the gates of Soto Cano. The department has a mutual aid agreement with the town of Comayagua, and also responds to major incidents off post, like the Feb. 11 transformer explosion at the Francisco Morazan hydroelectric plant.

•In sports action, the "Old Schoolers," a group of hoopers age 30 and over, taught the New Schoolers, age 29 and younger, a lesson in Basketball 101. The quartet of Bernard Harvey, Daryl "Big T" Taylor, Eric Hilliard and Melvin Cooper led the Old Schoolers to victory during this game and in three subsequent rematches.

•A four-member helicopter MEDEVAC crew from the 214th Medical De-

tachment (Air Ambulance) (Forward) received the 1999 Army Aviation Association of America Air/Sea Rescue Award for braving snake-infested trees and hurricane-spawned floods to rescue stranded Hondurans during Hurricane Mitch disaster relief operations in November 1998. The UH-60 Blackhawk crew, designated Witch Doctor 36, was composed of CW3 Robert Rawlings, CW2 Robert Flaugh, SGT Charles Winchell and SGT Curt Conyers.

### MARCH

A 40-member team from Joint Task Force-Bravo assisted Costa Rica's counter-narcotic police in eradicating about 1.3 million marijuana plants during a Central Skies mission that swept through the country's Talamanca Valley, March 1 through 9. The team, dubbed Task Force Enabler, provided Costa Rica's Public Security Ministry's Special Support Police command and control, and crucial air support, flying three UH-60 Blackhawks and a CH-47 Chinook out of Puerto Limon Airport on the Caribbean coast.

"To reach the lowest points, it would've taken three weeks to go in and out of the jungle," said Lt. Col. Minor Quiros, head of the Costa Rican special

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**Commander's Corner****Soto Cano Air Base, hardship assignment or paradise?****By Maj. James Combs**  
*Joint Security Forces*

Images of austere conditions, personal sacrifice, and even harsh living conditions come to mind when one deploys or transfers to a developing country such as Honduras. What a surprise I received upon my arrival here at Soto Cano last July. The stories I was provided along with my own pre-conceived notions of this "Wild West" location were quickly extinguished.

In my 15 years of traveling courtesy of Uncle Sam, I'd seen many inhospitable locations and have served several "hardship," or remote, tours. When informed I was heading for a command in Central America, I assumed more sacrifice on my part and another long year. Upon my arrival to Soto Cano via the "Freedom Bird," I quickly noticed the lush tropical setting and beautiful panorama of the mountain ranges flanking Soto Cano. First impressions were good, I pondered, but after all, 12 months must pass before I get my "freedom."

The next "awakening" for me was the base proper. Although the landscape was dotted with wooden "hooches," the environment seemed very hospitable and user-friendly to the residents of the base. Particu-

larly striking were the many amenities available to base residents. From the swimming pool to a first-class fitness facility, the base theater to the dining facility and everything from a library to base clubs, Soto Cano is more than a match for any of the assignments I had experienced before.

So far so good, but what about what Honduras had to offer us, and what about MWR activities with regard to off-base events? In some of my assignments to the Middle East, off-base travel, tourism and sightseeing were only imaginary. However, I quickly realized Honduras had a multitude of things to offer those of us stationed here, and the MWR activities were world-class in every respect. The striking beauty of this country and the hospitality of its people have made a lasting impression on us all. The variety and sheer excellence of tours to places like the Copan Ruins, Valley of the Angels, Roatan and Utila Islands have made this tour (whether PCS or TDY) more than a passing deployment or just killing time.

Moreover, my experience here at Soto Cano halfway through my yearlong tour has taught me many things along the way. The value of jointness; not the buzzword nor the impression of a joint atmosphere, but the real and earnest efforts of soldiers, airmen, and Marines in

a combined effort to accomplish a very real, and never-ending, mission here in the Joint Operations Area. The cumulative efforts of multiple services and organizations, accompanied by interaction with host nation and other nation's forces, have been an invaluable learning experience for myself and others so fortunate to have been stationed here. In every sense of the word, this is a true joint task force, and one whose impact is felt much further than the boundaries of Soto Cano Air Base or the borders of Honduras.

As I depart Soto Cano in about six months for a command at Nellis AFB in sunny Nevada, I'll surely reflect on my time here at Soto Cano with a sense of accomplishment and the knowledge that I've been a contributor to something much larger than any of us could ever imagine. For all the assignments I've had, and for the many deployments and contingencies I've been a part of, I shall always look back on the challenges and successes of this assignment with a great sense of pride. In retrospect, I hope to say this was perhaps my very best assignment, perhaps not so much for the activities and amenities, or even the mission, but the very special people who have made Soto Cano Air Base so memorable. Soto Cano a hardship assignment? I don't think so...

**Chaplain's Corner****What do you believe for certain?****By Chaplain (CPT) Arleigh vonSeggern**  
*JTF-Bravo Chaplain*

I recall when I was a child one evening as our family was gathered around the television set and we were watching a week-long program entitled "The Holocaust," the story of a family in the days before, during, and after World War II.

This family was Jewish, and the program brought out the atrocities committed upon this nation of people. What we were seeing didn't make a lot of sense, and I recall asking my father if we knew these things were going on and why we didn't do anything about it. His answer was very enlightening. He responded, we had heard of these things, but the stories we heard were so far out and outlandish, we didn't believe it.

But whether we can believe something is true or not, does not change the reality of something. Just because we cannot believe something exists does not mean it is not real, and likewise, no matter how hard we may believe something that is not true, no matter how sincere we may be, does not change the reality.

Take God. God is God. Believing in him or choosing not to believe does not change the fact that he is real. It does not change the fact that he made the Earth at his command. It does not change the fact that all we have ultimately comes from him.

The big difference is if we believe in him, we know it and can take great comfort that he not only made us and continues to take care of our families and us. This gives us the certainty and assurance that our lives are in his hands and that nothing is too small or insignificant for us to bring before him. For the person who chooses not to believe, there can be much uncertainty and unknown in the future.

In God's Word, the Bible, we learn the truth that "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Whether we choose to believe we are sinful or not does not change the fact that we are. Whether we believe or choose to disbelieve that Christ died for us does not change the fact Christ did. The good news is, if we believe we are sinful and that Christ died for us, our sin is forgiven. That is a fact we can believe with certainty!

**Legal claims could be denied if precautions not taken****By CPT Bradley Glaze**  
*Command Judge Advocate*

Theft of personal items and equipment from quarters or the work place is a problem facing many servicemembers and DOD civilian employees. Servicemembers and DOD civilians should be aware that recovery of money and small, valuable items under the claims system may be denied unless special precautions are taken to protect these items. To assist in recovering stolen money and the fair market value of valuable items such as jewelry, watches, coins, etc, servicemembers should follow the "double-lock rule." This simply means that the servicemember should keep valuables in a locked drawer or container inside a secured room. This is a rule that should be followed in quarters and in the office.

If a servicemember or DOD civilian leaves a purse or wallet un-

attended, these items should be secured in a locked drawer or safe, even for very short periods of time. Under no circumstances should such personal property be left overnight in the workplace. Similarly, money and valuable items left unattended in quarters should be secured inside of a locked container, such as a safe, lockbox or drawer. Absent such findings, it is unlikely that claims for loss of such items will be compensated by the claims system.

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## Year in Review

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support police's mountain operations. "It has put a big dent in the trafficker's product volume. And that's why we fight so hard together, because we want the marijuana off the streets and out of the reach of our children."

•Sixteen Soto Cano members joined more than 130 personnel from the United States and 20 different countries in an exercise designed to train and educate participants on how to better prepare for and handle natural disasters in Central America and the Caribbean. Called Fuerzas Aliadas-Humanitarias, the exercise was sponsored by U.S. Southern Command and hosted by the Dominican Republic. The scenario called for JTF-Bravo to deploy forces to Nicaragua in order to set up a combined joint task force cell, which was named Combined Joint Task Force Central America. The purpose of this cell was to support mock disaster relief efforts in the Republic of Nicaragua, which was recently hit by a hurricane.

•More than 100 participants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Joint Task Force-Bravo participated in Operations Fuerzas Unidas (United Force), March 12 through 16. The five-day operation consisted of specialty training, two airborne operations, and a disaster relief exercise. The mission tasked participants to conduct non-tactical, combined airborne operations and disaster relief operations. "This experience of using new equipment and being able to jump from different aircraft was great," said Capt. Edmundo Guatemala from El Salvador's Special Forces.

•As part of the multinational jump exercise, a team of healthcare professionals from Soto Cano's Medical Element and Honduras' armed forces evaluated more than 115 patients in the village of Querbrada Honda in Amarateca Valley, located just north of the Tamara Drop Zone. "It was a good feeling knowing that so little can make a difference in their lives," said SSG James Shaffer, a former MEDEL radiology technician here.

•Also in March, 11 soldiers and two airmen attended the MEDEL-sponsored combat lifesavers course, learning to treat casualties during combat. "The information I learned will be invaluable to me if I am ever in a life-threatening situation," said Tech. Sgt. Lesa Dubois, formerly of the AFFOR orderly room.

•March saw the departure of COL Elliot Rosner and the arrival of COL Edward Martin III, as the interim commander of Joint Task Force-Bravo.

In a stunning development, many new troops arrived at Soto Cano in March while an equal number left. Those that remained behind had to learn a bunch of new names and faces.

### APRIL

A MEDEVAC crew saved the life of a Dutch boy who was shot in the stomach

by pirates off of Honduras' north coast. Willem van Tuijl, age 13, suffered in severe pain for more than 20 hours until Soto Cano's "Witch Doctors" were called to the scene. The team of 1LT Jeff Sullins, CW2 Chris Palumbo, SGT Robert Congdon, SPC Ryan Ballas and SPC Sergio Rojas dusted off from Soto Cano and transported the critically wounded youth to a hospital in La Ceiba. The teen was later flown by commercial air to the Children's Medical Center in Dallas with kidney and spinal cord damage, which has left him paralyzed from the waist down.

•Later in the month, a pair of CH-47 Chinook helicopters from the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment airlifted more than 120 sacks of rice April 12 to Misquito Indians living in the northeast corner of Honduras. The Chinooks transported the much-needed food to the remote municipalities of Wanpusirpi and Ahuas, where they were divvied out to 10 Misquito communities. Hurricane Mitch destroyed the farmlands used by these Indians farmers, who used to grow corn, rice, plantains and manioc on the banks of the Patuca River. The hurricane left the land barren, and the people were facing starvation. This is why Joint Task Force-Bravo and the 1-228th, in partnership with the World Food Program, which organized and managed the relief effort, helped distribute almost 40 metric tons of food donated by charitable organizations in the United States.

•On April 15, Detachment 1, 612th Air Operations Group deactivated during an official ceremony, and became the 612th Air Base Squadron. The Air Staff approved this organizational change request because AFFOR has a mission separate and distinct from that of the 612th AOG, which warranted the distinction of a squadron. Later that month, Lt. Col. John Brainerd assumed command of the new squadron and Air Force Forces on Soto Cano.

•When you live in paradise, softball season never ends, at least, so it seems at Soto Cano. The Air Force Forces Team 1 managed to pull out of a nosedive in April to win the Soto Cano Air Base softball championship for the third season in a row. The 20-3 AFFOR squad almost had their threepeat dashed by a well-organized Comayagua team composed of Hondurans. The Hondurans actually beat the Americans at their national pastime in the first game of the night, 13-8; but the Comayagua team had to play AFFOR again, because of the double-elimination format.

•"They just outplayed us, hit the ball when they had to and made all the routine plays. We didn't," said David Beeson, AFFOR pitcher that season.

•More than 20 soldiers and airmen participated in SPIES (Special Patrol Infiltration/Exfiltration System) training in the X-ray area of Soto Cano. Some of



Photo by 1st Lt. Kim Garbett

**After a 12-day counterdrug operation patrolling the coastline of the Dominican Republic, supplies and UH-60 Blackhawks were unloaded from a C-5 Galaxy at the end of Operation Night Stalker July 30.**

the soldiers and airmen who participated in the training also took part in rappelling from a UH-60 Blackhawk before commencing with SPIES training.

•Fliers from the 1-228th's Alpha company took part in the Army swim test and pre-dunker swimming test as part of their annual training. Two dozen soldiers took part in the test to ensure they could swim and float if they ever ditched their helos over water. Aviators must be able to survive long enough until help arrives.

### MAY

During the first week of May, the base's air traffic controllers welcomed the addition of a new mobile tower. Perched atop a Humvee and standing nearly 15-feet tall, the new mobile tower brought a sigh of relief to the controllers. For months, the controllers had worked out of a former guard shack that is smaller than most tree forts, but with less visibility and no place to drop water balloons on unsuspecting passers-by.

The new mobile tower can hold four people comfortably and direct an unlimited number of planes at the same time; the tower will serve as the base of ATC operations and direct traffic until the permanent site is completed.

•The 1st Bn., 228th Aviation Regiment returned May 8 from a successful counterdrug mission on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. The mission, titled Operation Weedeater, required a crew of 24 personnel from the 1-228th and Joint Security Forces to provide aviation reconnaissance support to the Trinidad and Tobago Security Forces.

Using two UH-60 Blackhawks, aircrews helped the DEA and tactical police locate and eradicate more than \$29 million worth of marijuana plants on the islands. This was the second time in less than six months that a Weedeater operation has been conducted in Trinidad. However, it was a first-ever event for the men and women of the 228th as they used a U.S. Reserve Command C-5 Galaxy to deploy their personnel and

equipment, which included the two Blackhawk helicopters.

•New Horizons construction ended in Belize at the end of May. Many Belize children will benefit from the sweat and hard work put in by many members of America's Armed Forces during Operation New Hope. A total of seven schools had extensions added to them, which included 20 new classrooms built with cooperation from the Marines, soldiers, airmen and Seabees from Task Force Pelican. There were also four wells dug in several towns, repairs made to four other wells and medical treatment and screening was provided to more than 8,000 Belizeans, free of cost. During a closing ceremony speech, Maj. Gen. Bennett Landreneau, adjutant general, Louisiana National Guard, said, "Last year I said, 'New Hope is not about buildings and wells, it's about building bonds between people and between governments.' I believe the mission of New Hope has been accomplished and it has been a success."

•Air Force doctors from Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, gave Honduran children with orthopedic problems a chance for a brighter future when they made a visit to Hospital Escuela in Tegucigalpa. The doctors treated many children with congenital disorders such as hip problems and club feet as well as children with injuries that never properly mended.

•A medical health and wellness fair took place at the dining facility, raising the level of awareness service members currently have toward preventive medicine. MEDEL personnel are trying to expose soldiers, airmen and Hondurans to the many preventive measures that are available to them. This medical awareness exposition had several interactive stations such as latex breasts containing cancer-like lumps that visitors could simulate a self-examination on and a "wheel of fortune" where participants could win prizes. Also on the medical

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Photos by Master Sgt. Pat McKenna

Col. (Dr.) Charles Hardin, from the 59th Medical Wing, out of Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, works on one of many patients at a Medical Readiness Training Exercise held Aug. 13 through 24 in Honduras.

# JTF-Bravo 200



Members of the Guatemalan Department of Anti-Narcotics deploy from a 1st B Guatemala City, Guatemala, during Mayan Jaguar, May 22 through 29. The Ce

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side of the house, an Air Force clinical psychologist saw patients during a three-month stint that began in May. Base officials hope to soon have a psychologist permanently assigned to Soto Cano.

### JUNE

The May-June timeframe was a nightmare for drug traffickers in Central America as the task force conducted two Central Skies missions within weeks of each other. The first mission, Mayan Jaguar, was conducted the last week of May, launching from Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, a scenic port on the country's small Caribbean coast. Although not a single marijuana leaf was found, nor a dime bag of cocaine uncovered, the commander of the counter-narcotic operation called it a success. "We're building for the future," said LTC Brian Keeth, the operation's commander. "Our victory was to regain the political will to conduct Central Skies operations in Guatemala, and to be able to train with their police and military forces in the counterdrug effort."

•The Task Force had better luck a week later during Operation Lifesaver II, a Central Skies mission in Honduras. On June 5, intelligence sources learned that an 18-wheeler truck, known to be moving drugs through the area, would be moving through Honduras that day. A truck matching that description was spotted heading toward Guatemala and was stopped and detained by Honduran authorities. The counterdrug team got the call, and within an hour was on their way to the intercept site. The

team took a 228th UH-60 Blackhawk with a DEA agent, JSF dog handler, a dog and seven Honduran counternarcotics cops to the location. There, they discovered 283 bundles of cocaine weighing a kilo each inside the truck. The cocaine was said to have a street value of \$566,000 in Miami. "This was the largest drug bust in history for a Central Skies mission conducted in Honduras," said Keeth.

•The 1-20th Special Forces Group, commanded by LTC Timothy Payne, began setting up shop June 9 in preparation for a three-week combined training exercise with the Honduran special forces units called a Joint Combined Exercise for Training. The JCET missions are designed to provide Special Forces with immersion training and promote familiarity and close working relationships between U.S. troops and those of foreign forces which in turn help us to promote democratic values, including human rights, in the customs and language of the people.

•Other news included a CH-47 Chinook that was dispatched to the lush Utila island to help battle underground fires that had been smoldering for several days. The fires were moving along the roots of mangrove trees, randomly popping above ground to burn grasses and trees. The Chinook ferried two Fire Dawgs from Soto Cano, and 12 bomberos, or Honduran firefighters. The Chinook used its "Bambi" water bucket that can hold several thousand gallons of water to drop on fires burning above ground.

•A new construction technique, which could be used in future military engineer exercises, was used in the construction of the Corquin Clinic in western Honduras. Most military construction projects, including the New Horizons exercises, use concrete masonry unit block construction. However, the construction of the 34-room

hospital clinic was built using "panel" instead of block construction. Panel construction brings the advantages increased durability, greater versatility, and reduced costs. The construction technique is also much faster than block construction and relatively easy to learn.

•During a change of command ceremony at the Tanja Drop Zone, LTC Brian Keeth relinquished command of Army Forces to LTC Wayne Deneff. Also during the month, LTC William Braun passed the reins of command for the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment to LTC Scott Ciluffo.

•For the first two weeks of June, a team of doctors, nurses and medical technicians from two military hospitals in San Antonio, Texas operated on indigent patients with perforated eardrums from chronic ear infections at Leonardo Martinez Hospital in San Pedro Sula, Honduras's industrial and trade capital. Capt. (Dr.) David Thomas, a former flight surgeon at Soto Cano and the mission's OIC, said, "This is why I became a doctor. In the end, this will probably be the most rewarding experience of my tour in Honduras. For many families, this is the only chance their child will have to hear. And without hearing, you're so disconnected from the world. This surgery offers life-changing possibilities."

### JULY

During a change of command ceremony, held July 7 at the 1-228th Aviation Regiment's hanger, a new commander was handed the Joint Task Force-Bravo guidon. The new commander, COL Michael Wood, came to Soto Cano from the Republic of Korea, where he served as the Chief of Plans Division J-5, United States Forces Korea. The colonel replaced COL Edward Martin, who served four months at Soto Cano.

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Photo by Master Sgt. Pat McKenna

**1, 228th Aviation Regiment UH-60 Blackhawk during a demonstration for VIPs in**  
**ies mission bolstered Guatemala's resolve to fight drug traffickers.**

•The New Horizons mission in the mountains near inagua, Nicaragua was well under way in July. More n 150 U.S. troops and 80 Nicaraguan soldiers were de-oyed to the task force through September. The main ob-jectives of the mission were to set up base camp and con-act the proposed projects - two clinics and a two-room ool with a latrine facility.

The engineers worked with irregularly sized concrete ecks, odd-shaped windows, unfamiliar equipment, re parts and tools. Although this was one of the biggest bblems the team faced, they overcame it by ingenuity l improvisation.

### AUGUST

With only a nine-day spin-up, Operation Night Stalk- deployed to the Dominican Republic with a 35-mem- team from Soto Cano that was focused on providing ghttime counterdrug coastal surveillance along the ntry's coastline. The primary goal was to assist in dering drugs from entering the Dominican Republic for duration of the mission, and during that 12-day peri- the presence of U.S. forces effectively and signifi- ntly curtailed drug movement along the coastline. ug smugglers and a "go-fast" boat scheduled to arrive he Dominican Republic with the \$35 million cargo of aine did turn back, bypassing the Dominican Repub- for Puerto Rico, said Maj. Gary McMeen, the task ce's operations officer.

Also during the Central Skies mission, the 228th was patched to aid a village of Cabeza Indians, who were fering from an outbreak of E.Coli poisoning. More n 200 Indians, mostly children, experienced severe miting and diarrhea from the poisoning. AMEDEVAC ackhawk winged out to the village and delivered med-

ical supplies to relieve the suffering.

Almost 50 personnel from Joint Task Force-Bravo and the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment deployed to Puerto Limon, Costa Rica, to assist that nation's counter- drug police with finding and destroying marijuana. Over an eight-day period, despite weather setbacks and me- chanical difficulties, the U.S. military team and Costa Ri- can mountain police destroyed more than 622,000 mari- juana plants, ranging from tiny sprouts to 12-foot plants. "Motivation for the mission was sky-high for both the U.S. and Costa Rican personnel, adding to the enthusi- asm to do the mission," said LTC Wayne Deneff, Task Force Enabler commander. "The main goal was to go down to Costa Rica and train and work with the Costa Ri- cans. Along with that (main goal), we accomplished the mission and conducted a successful eradication mission ... all of it done safely."

•Also in August, the pilot of a C-130 decided he would rather land at Soto Cano Air Base than take his chances at a Nicaraguan airport when warning lights on the plane he was piloting reported there were problems with its land- ing gear. Unlike most in-flight emergencies, the base had plenty of time and forewarning that the aircraft was com- ing in. Seven vehicles and almost 30 personnel from the fire department, along with troops from the Medical Ele- ment and other base operations agencies, scrambled to re- spond to the in-flight emergency. In the end, the plane safely landed at Soto Cano.

•A plastic surgery team of 10 Air Force doctors, an anesthesiologist and nurses from the Wilford Hall Med- ical Center at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, treated Hondurans for injuries and congenital diseases at Co- mayagua's Santa Teresa Hospital from Aug. 13 to 24. Congenital diseases such as cleft lips and palates often go

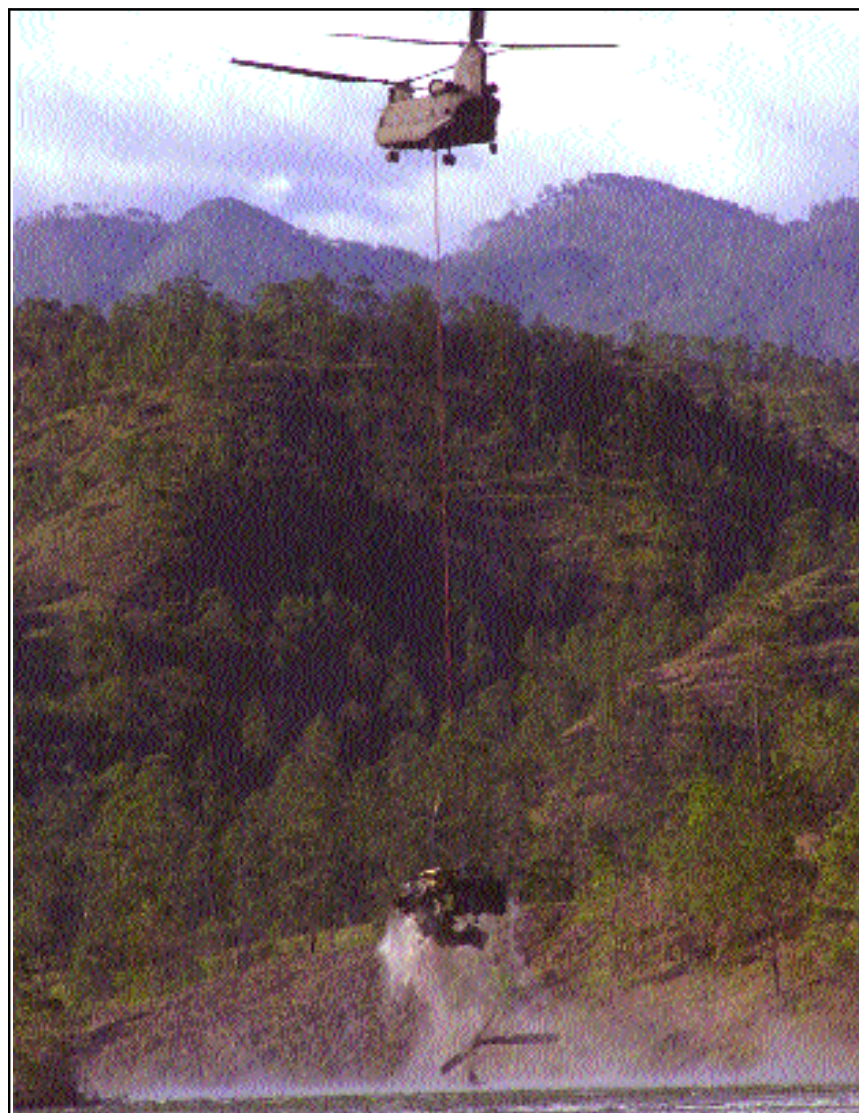


Photo by Master Sgt. Pat McKenna

**A 1-228th CH-47 Chinook helicopter from Soto Cano AB pulls the**  
**sunken Honduran UH-1 helicopter out of the reservoir.**

untreated in Honduras. "One of my favorite patients that I have had was a 12-year-old boy who had an unrepaired cleft lip and palate, who walked for three days, by him- self, to get here," said Col. (Dr.) Charles Hardin, chief of the plastic surgery MEDRETE. "Of course there is no way to get parental consent, but we asked him if his par- ents knew where he was, he said 'Si,' and we performed the operation."

•Jumping back to March, the commander of Joint Task Force-Bravo's Medical Element issued a challenge to the base: If more than 20 students signed up for the Univers- ity of Maryland human biology class he volunteered to teach, he would donate his teaching fee to charity. Twen- ty-eight students from all five of the base's major subor- dinate commands enrolled in his class the largest college class ever convened on Soto Cano. In August, LTC (Dr.) Michael Russo handed over \$1,600 to Marine Lt. Col. Roy Harlan, former deputy director of civil affairs and past president of the Honduran Charitable Organization.

### SEPTEMBER

A team of U.S. soldiers, sailors and airmen pulled up the wreckage of a Honduran Air Force UH-1H "Huey" helicopter in mid-September that had crashed and sunk 35 feet to the bottom of a reservoir in Central Honduras. Three Honduran airmen and one passenger were killed June 26 when the low-flying helicopter struck a wire ca- ble strung across the El Coyolar Dam. The helicopter was participating in a joint United States and Honduran mili- tary exercise called Relampago Azul ("Blue Lightning"), and was returning to Hernan Acosta Mejia Air Force Base when it crashed. Search and rescue personnel and divers

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JTF-Bravo

# Year In Review

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from Joint Task Force-Bravo at Soto Cano joined with Honduran emergency workers to recover the bodies on June 27.

•Then in September, a team from the Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two Detachment at Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, Puerto Rico, and 40-odd members from Joint Task Force-Bravo, including Air Force firefighters and rescue personnel, Army military police and helicopter riggers, convoyed out to the El Coyolar Dam, about 25 miles from Soto Cano and about 40 miles from Tegucigalpa.

The divers attached rubber bags to the Huey, inflating them with compressed air. Within a minute, the 7,000-pound helicopter floated to the surface. A twin-rotored CH-47 Chinook helicopter from Soto Cano's 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment dropped a 100-foot cable, which the divers attached to the sling-loaded Huey. The Chinook pulled the mangled UH-1 helicopter across the reservoir and deposited it on a concrete pad on the dam's banks.

•Public affairs practitioners from throughout Central America and the Caribbean converged on Soto Cano for the first-ever multilateral public affairs exchange seminar Sept. 10 through 14. Representing eight countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Honduras and the United States, more than 35 top military and civilian leaders came to Soto Cano to share experiences and knowledge between the many countries and to standardize different approaches to public affairs. The countries selected were all Spanish speaking; the seminar was conducted entirely in Spanish. USSOUTHCOM PA spearheaded the concept for this pilot program, in conjunction with the Commander in Chief's vision. Joint Task Force-Bravo was selected as a test site by USSOUTHCOM for a potential future Public Affairs Exchange Center, where multilateral exchanges like this could continue to occur on a regular basis.

•On Sept. 20, the Marines landed at Soto Cano. For the next four months, the Marines worked hand-in-hand with the airmen and lone soldier at the Joint Security Forces and the Honduran La Guardia maintaining base security and law enforcement operations for JTF-Bravo. The Marines came from Reserve units in five states: California, Kentucky, Minnesota, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Soldiers and Marines deployed to Nicaragua for Task Force Sebaco in Nicaragua, wrapped up their projects and completed their mission during this month. Engineers there built a new school and two clinics, as well as a swing set and compost latrine, which was put behind the school with leftover material. The road to the school was reworked with graders and other heavy equipment

to make access easier for the children.

"One of the best parts about doing this type of mission is seeing how it is appreciated by those locals who will use the facilities," said CSM John Harris, Company A, 1st Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group from Alabama Harris. "We were able to make a few minor improvements along with the projects like, level the playing field and some of the roads around here. After we leveled them, a little girl came up to me and said 'Thank you. Now I can ride my bike.' It's not just the major things, but the small things that make all the difference."

While in Nicaragua, one engineer, SGM Paul Madigan, organized a charity drive that allowed the task force to donate more than 2,000 pounds of clothing and school supplies to orphanages and the needy in Nicaragua and Honduras. "As you can imagine, the children were excited and overjoyed," said Madigan. "All of the work was done through the volunteer efforts of many people, organizations and businesses. It was a very difficult project, but probably the most worthwhile I have ever been involved with."

•A team from Soto Cano's civil affairs tactical support section traveled to Salomon Pineda Castellanos, a grade school in Siguatopeque, to deliver much-needed school supplies. The school teaches about 200 students in grades 1 through 6. The team delivered two boxes of supplies including pens, pencils, crayons, rulers, notebooks and chalk. The school also received a Honduran national flag to honor the Month of Honduran Independence.

•Finally in September, a U.S. Army Manpower Team made a visit to conduct a complete review of all positions in Army Forces, Medical Element, Joint Security Forces and the Joint Staff. The team's three-week visit addressed not only the proper manning requirements for each area but also the constant turnover battle and inadequate notification time some of our personnel receive for their deployment to JTF-Bravo. The team concluded that everybody on Soto Cano works much too hard, recommending that the Army should double the manning on the base! (OK, that last part I made up...)

## OCTOBER

On Oct. 1 and 2, Category IV Hurricane Keith stalled over Belize, dumping more than 30 inches of torrential rain in some areas and walloping its coastline



Photo by SPC Jeremy Heckler

**Members of Joint Task Force-Bravo search and rescue team carry a casualty to safety during a mass casualty exercise Oct. 24.**

and tourist islands with sustained winds of 135 mph. The islands of Caye Caulker and Ambergris Caye received the brunt of the storm. Winds and a six-foot high storm surge trashed the town of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye, tearing off roofs, splintering piers, grounding boats and flooding homes on the town's western, lagoon side.

Officials estimate it will cost millions of dollars to restore tourist-dependent Belize's coral-fringed cays and gin-clear waters to their natural beauty. After Keith meandered its way slowly across the Yucatan Peninsula into the Gulf of Mexico, a 38-member team composed of professionals from Joint Task Force-Bravo and the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment took off from Soto Cano on Oct. 4 in three UH-60 Blackhawks and one CH-47 Chinook and flew to Belize City to set up operations. U.S. Southern Command sent in the Soto Cano team to assess the condition of the runway at Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport in Belize City and to ferry officials from the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster to outlying areas, where they could evaluate the damage. Besides the assessments, the team made emergency food drops and delivered medical supplies, water, toiletries and other much-needed items throughout the country.

"Nobody else could offer the same capabilities as rapidly as Joint Task Force-Bravo could," said COL Michael Wood, JTF-Bravo commander. "Our rapid response showed our commitment to the region and the people of Belize. We're key Central American partners, performing the CINC's regional engagement strategy."

•During the first week of October, a 10-member U.S. military surgical team treated patients with hand injuries and deformities at Hospital Escuela, a teaching hospital in Tegucigalpa. The team

was composed of two hand surgeons, a hand surgeon resident, an anesthesiologist, a nurse anesthetist, an occupational therapist, an operating room nurse, an enlisted OR technician, and two enlisted orthopedic techs. The majority of the team was from Darnell Army Community Hospital at Fort Hood, Texas. In addition to the 10-member team, three members from Joint Task Force-Bravo lent their assistance by working the logistics of the mission and by providing a translator. This was the second such hand surgery MEDRETE conducted in Honduras. Unlike other MEDRETEs, which focus on aiding the indigent Honduran patients while training U.S. military health professionals for war, the hand surgery visits also provide medical education to Honduran physicians and residents.

"We didn't go out to the boonies to do this exercise; we came to Hospital Escuela for a good reason," said LTC (Dr.) Mark Bagg, the team leader, who also did a six-month stint at Soto Cano in 1991. "One of the biggest impacts of this mission is showing (Honduran) doctors and residents how to manage acute hand injuries. Hand surgery is a fairly neglected field in Honduras and hasn't captured the interest of physicians here. One reason is that they don't have the equipment to do this type of surgery properly. You need smaller instruments, smaller sutures, magnifying glasses and microscopes. It is very complicated and intricate work. If you don't have the right instruments, hand surgery isn't a lot of fun."

•In other MEDEL news, COL (Dr.) James Martin took over as commander of Joint Task Force-Bravo's Medical Element (MEDEL) from LTC (Dr.) Michael Russo in an outdoor ceremony

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held Oct. 6. Russo left Soto Cano Air Base for Walter Reed Army Institute of Research to serve as Chief, Department of Biomedical Assessment, Division of Neuropsychiatry. Martin came to Soto Cano from the Health Services Division of the Office of Surgeon General, Washington, D.C. Martin is a native of Oxford, Miss., and received his bachelor of science in chemistry from the University of Mississippi, obtaining his doctorate of medicine from the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

•Athletes competed in the first-ever Mondo Hondo Triathlon held Oct 6, competing in a race that combined swimming, bicycling and running. The competitors completed a seven laps in the pool, followed by a two-lap, 12.5 mile bicycle ride around the perimeter of Soto Cano Air Base and ending with a 2.5-mile run that concluded in front of the Recovery Room Café. Joshua Keesal of MEDEL took the overall title, placing first in the men's 34-and-under division with a time of 1 hour, 12 minutes, 9 seconds, outdistancing the entire field. The top finisher in the women's division was Dana Thomas, also from MEDEL.

•Eight members from Joint Task Force-Bravo also participated in the Army 10-Miler, the largest 10-mile race in the nation, Oct. 15, in Washington, D.C. The team from Soto Cano competed against 122 other teams entered in the the mixed open military category, finishing in 30th place, a strong showing considering the team came from a post of only 500 military members. The team included Sheldon Thomas, John Kunstbeck, Christopher Danbeck, Elias Odar, Irving Rodriguez, Kevin Santos, Tricia Evans and Melissa Melger.

### NOVEMBER

More than 45 members from Joint Task Force-Bravo and the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment flew across Honduras' western border into Ilopango

Air Base, El Salvador, for a nine-day counterdrug mission. Operation Allied Action kicked off Nov. 13 with an aircraft package consisting of three UH-60 Blackhawks, one CH-47 Chinook and one UH-60 MEDEVAC. In nine days, 89.5 aircraft hours were logged with about 20 missions flown. The operation was part of the JTF-Bravo's Central Skies counterdrug program designed to provide support to U.S. DEA and host nation law enforcement agencies while conducting countrywide counterdrug operations. The Central Skies program works to strengthen bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation against illegal narco-trafficking.

The concentration of effort of this particular Central Skies was the emphasis on border control checkpoints. ACH-47 Chinook transported a pickup truck and U.S. DEA and El Salvadoran law enforcement officials set up roadblocks at selected border checkpoints while a Blackhawk provided additional surveillance in the skies. In another part of the country, two Blackhawks conducted training and headed out on marijuana eradication missions and surveillance or clandestine airfield operations. "Although we came up empty handed — no marijuana, no narco-traffickers," said LTC Wayne DeNeff, Task Force Enabler commander, "the training was critical and the team did an outstanding job working together. We accomplished what we set out to do: engage with the host nation, coordinate with them, and plan and work together with other government agencies."

•On Nov. 9, Soto Cano leaders and Honduran officers walked the perimeter of Soto Cano during "Caminata de los Coroneles" or "La Caminata" as it is more commonly called. The Colonels' Foot March is a combined walk hosted biannually by the Joint Task Force-Bravo commander. The march is designed to "be a good chance for fellowship with

our Honduran guests," said COL Michael Wood, JTF-B commander. "The advantage to hosting this Caminata is that it's not only enhancing the camaraderie between the United States and Honduras, but it also gives the key military leaders in-country a chance to talk about things we wouldn't normally have a chance to talk about. The Caminata is also a great opportunity to repay the Hondurans for hosting us in their country."

•Gen. Peter Pace, U.S. Southern Command commander in chief, made his first visit to Soto Cano, after assuming command in September. He received a briefing from JTF-Bravo officials and toured the base. During his visit, he said "I want you all to know that the ripple effect of what you're doing here is greater than you think it to be; it has international implications. There are a lot of folks who recognize and appreciate you are here away from your families, especially during the holidays like this. There are many who are thankful for what you do in this region."

•A Special Forces team from Fort Bragg, N.C., with assistance from Joint Task Force-Bravo, attempted to "defuse" the landmine threat in Nicaragua in November. Eight noncommissioned officers and a captain from the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 731, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, spent October and November training 50 Nicaraguan soldiers from an emergency response platoon. The Spanish-speaking U.S. team-taught the soldiers how to carry out United Nations humanitarian demining operations safely at the School of Sergeants near Managua. The Nicaraguans call their demining soldiers "zapadores," Spanish for sappers — troops who specialize in deploying and detecting mines.

Joint Task Force-Bravo provided logistical support to the special forces team, and sent two officers, MAJ Paul Dulchinos and CPT Charles Battiste — to Nicaragua for about a week to assist in the training. "We ordered all the equipment and supplies so the team could conduct their training with the Nicaraguans," said Dulchinos, deputy director of JTF-Bravo's engineering section. "We supplied them with everything they needed to do their jobs: from mine detectors and Kevlar blast suits to MREs and immunizations. It's a small mission with a huge impact that has international visibility. And it's just one more example of the task force's humanitarian efforts in the region."

•In Turkey Bowl 2000, the annual football grudge match between the Air Force and Army at Soto Cano, the Air Force conceded the victory to the Army by the score of 28-24.

A top Air Force official, who asked not to be named, admitted the Air Force tanked the game, because as he stated, "We've won this game so many times that we were afraid the Army guys would quit playing us. So we felt that if they got the sweet taste of victory in their mouths once every couple years, then they

wouldn't take their ball and go home." This clever strategy seems to have worked. Anthony Elmore of ARFOR caught a "Hail Mary" pass that bounced off a teammate and an AFFOR defender to score the winning touchdown with 1:04 left on the clock. "My first intention was to make the play," said Elmore, who played wide receiver. "I'm the playmaker for this team, and I did what I had to do to make the play."

•In other sports action, the Air Force Forces "A" team pulled off a trifecta in the finals of the base softball tournament, defeating the Winged Warriors of 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment once and the J Staff twice, capturing the base softball title. The AFFOR team won their way out of the loser's bracket by holding onto a 16-12 victory over the Winged Warriors. The airmen came out and pounded the J-Staff in the finals 18-6 and 18-8. The J-Staff came into the game undefeated and needed to win one of the two games for the title. The game was a rematch of the semifinals, where the J-Staff had sent AFFOR "A" to their only defeat of the tournament.

### DECEMBER

All in all, December was the slowest news month at Soto Cano. Many folks went home for the holidays, while those that stayed tried to dole out some Christmas cheer to those less fortunate. Several units threw Christmas parties at the local orphanages, while the Air Force held a Christmas Ball at the Princess Hotel in Tegucigalpa.

•The biggest story of the month was that Air Force medical professionals from the 90th and 341st Medical Groups conducted a MEDRETE on Honduras' Mosquito Coast. At a base camp in Catacamas, patients were treated for their aches and pains, received immunizations, dental care, and received eye checks. The medical team also distributed eyeglasses to those who needed them. Overall, the group treated 3,226 patients, 734 dental patients and immunized 990 people. The group also passed out 413 pairs of glasses. The most important part of the trip, however, could not be quantified in mere numbers, but in the many lives touched by the doctors and medics. At the village of Tikkarya, deep in the Mosquito Coast of Honduras, medics brought instant relief for many of the villagers. "This is a different culture than many Hondurans know about where many of the people don't even speak Spanish," said COL (Dr.) James Martin, MEDEL commander. "This is the most primitive area we have been to and one of the most inaccessible. There is a dramatic need for services and care."

And so that wraps up 2000. As you've read, the men and women of Soto Cano Air Base accomplished much over the past year, performing professionally and admirably in fulfilling the CINCUS-SOUTHCOM's engagement strategy for the region. In the year to come, members of JTF-Bravo will again be ready to meet the challenges that will face them.



Photo by SPC Jeremy Heckler

**A competitor in the Mondo Hondo Triathlon swims for the end of the pool and the next part of his journey. The Mondo Hondo Triathlon is a test of the competitor's endurance, swimming 400-meters in the pool, followed by riding a bicycle for 12.5 miles and then running 2.5 miles to the finish line.**

## BRIEFS

### Prevent Bicycle Theft

Please ensure your bicycles are secured properly or housed accordingly. Soto Cano has witnessed an outbreak of bike thefts immediately after the new year rolled around. Take nothing for granted--thieves are on the prowl here at Soto Cano Air Base.

### Troop to Cop, Teacher

Most Army personnel are very familiar with the Army ACAP Transition Office in charge of Troops to Cops, TROOP TO TEACHERS, and all Transition/Career Programs on CONUS posts. In accordance with AR 621-5, all Army Education Centers refer personnel to follow the three-sheets web referral sheets given out by the education technician, and complete follow-up when you return to CONUS ACAP offices. Air Force, Marines and Army have different regulations; the Army centers (Soto Cano Air Base Army regulations) have no "ACAP transition Troops to Teachers in the Center. CONUS ACAP offices on CONUS posts have a GS-12 and five-member staff, not connected at all with the post Army education centers. Pick up the three-page web and 1-800 Info contact numbers from the Education Center, and go online for follow-up. Your next visit to a CONUS post is your follow-up action; for the Air Force, go to their Base Education Center, and for Army personnel, go to the Post ACAP transition office.

### New Postal Rates

Effective Jan. 7, the price of postage increased for both domestic and international mail.

### Self-Help Center

The Dyncorp Self-Help Center is open to help troops maintain their barracks rooms. They offer minor construction materials, tools and safety equipment for the maintenance and beautification of living and work areas. They also have pesticides for controlling insects and rodents. Troops must first attend a safety class before using the equipment. For more information, contact Jose Reyes at ext. 4139.

### UMUC Term Three

UMUC will be offering classes for the winter term. Classes begin on Feb. 5 and end on Mar. 23. UMUC is offering Elementary Spanish I, Advanced Features of Microcomputer Applications Software, Contemporary Topics and Application and Introduction to Small Business Management. Three seminar classes are also scheduled: Introduction to Microcomputers Hardware and Software, Desktop Operating Systems and Introduction to Microcomputers: Accessing information via the Internet. For more information, contact Luis Ortiz at ext. 4557.



Photos by SPC Jeremy Heckler

Senior Master Sgt. Bob Jenkins of the Fire Dawgs, and another competitor vie for pie-eating supremacy.

# 2001: An Air Base Odyssey

By SPC Jeremy Heckler  
*Iguana Editor*

Soto Cano kicked off 2001 with a bang as troops converged on the Oasis Club for fun and excitement and said goodbye to the year 2000.

The revelers trickled into the club as they signed up for a shot at the ultimate prize, one round trip ticket home as well as trips to Roatan and Utila and other Honduran vacation spots.

On the Oasis Club stage, the band Skypark was tuning up on the first night of their Department of Defense tour. The band rocked away to the classics as well as some of their own originals.

In between sets, members of the band sat in and participated in the pie-eating contest, along with members of the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment, MEDEL, ARFOR and the Fire Department. SPC Anthony Hammond of Company A, 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment took the title of best pie eater, completing his two pies and starting on a third before the contest was called.

Hammond later got jiggy with it on stage with Skypark.

Later in the evening, troops competed in an egg toss and a hot dog eating contest for pride and prizes furnished by AAFES.

"Our goal is to get as many people together to meet and feel welcome,"

said CSM Herman Fisher, Joint Task Force-Bravo command sergeant major who stepped into the role of Father Time for the event.

As midnight drew near, a DJ kept the club rocking through the night, as members of Soto Cano got funky on the Oasis Club's dance floor.

"I like the fact that we can be together as friends because we are so far away from home," said SPC Renee Rothwell of MEDEL. This is the second straight year that Rothwell has welcomed the New Year in a deployed area. Last year she was deployed to Camp Doha in the Kuwaiti desert.

"The whole holiday season has been great, because even though I'm away from home, I'm here with my friends, enjoying the season," said PFC Dionne Brown of MEDEL.

The closing minutes of 2000 slowly ticked off as Father Time gathered up the troops for the playing of Auld Lang Syne.

When the clock struck midnight the club broke out in celebration, taking to the dance floor, rocking in the New Year.

The year 2000 was now a not-so-distant memory and the year 2001 is under way.



The Oasis Club rocks in the New Year and says goodbye to the old year Dec. 31, 2000.